



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

VICTOR HOLANDA, AICP
DIRECTOR

August 29, 2008

Terry Payne
RRM Design Group
3765 South Higuera Street #101
San Luis Obispo, Calif. 93401

[By Email: tppayne@rrmdesign.com]

Subject: **SUB2004-00160 / Tract 2424 – Ellsworth Planned Development
825 South Halcyon Road – Arroyo Grande (APN: 075-011-041)**

Dear Ms. Payne:

We have reviewed the plans that you submitted on August 22, 2008 and subsequently on August 27, 2008. Based on our review we have identified several substantive issues that would need to be addressed up front in order for the environmental document to be completed. As you are aware, completion of the environmental document must be done in advance of the Board of Supervisors taking action on this project.

Unfortunately, submittals were not received promptly and certain elements of the project are inconsistent with ordinance and General Plan requirements. Revisions are necessary in order for the project to comply with the Land Use Ordinance and General Plan. Because of these reasons, we anticipate that the environmental document cannot be completed in time for the Board to take action at the November 4, 2008 hearing. Consequently, we will be recommending continuance to the December 16, 2008 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Nonetheless, we need the revisions discussed in this letter to be made **as soon as possible**. We are asking that you address all issues completely and submit revised plans to the Permit Center by **no later than 4:30 pm on September 25, 2008**. This will give you approximately four weeks to respond to these corrections. However, if you can address these corrections earlier without compromising on quality, it would be highly beneficial.

MAJOR ISSUES

In review of this project, we have identified several major issues which need to be addressed up front:

- 1) **Storage Condominium** – The storage condominium concept cannot be supported. The Land Use Ordinance specifically requires that mini-storage be for rent or lease to the general public.

- 2) **Building Height** – From the plans provided, we are unable to determine what the height above average natural grade is for each building. Height is calculated *above average natural grade* – not above pad elevation. It appears that the southerly storage building exceeds a height of 35 feet above average natural grade. Please refer to Section 22.10.090 of the Land Use Ordinance for a description of how height above average natural grade is measured.
- 3) **Structural Area** – Structural area is limited to 48 percent of the site area. We calculate this to be approximately 35,336 square feet. This limitation applies to all floors of a building, but not to residential garages. Based on the numbers provided on the site plan and floor plans, we estimate the structural area on this site to be 39,400 square feet. This exceeds the maximum by approximately 4,064 square feet.
- 4) **Retaining Walls** – The grading concept appears to require extensive use of large retaining walls. This is a concern relative to project visibility, as it would be considered an impact to the visual character of the community. Additionally, grading plans do not address whether and to what extent retaining walls are necessary between the on-site grading and improvements in the right-of-way.
- 5) **Earthwork Quantities** – Earthwork quantities were not provided on the grading plan. We need to know the earthwork quantities for two reasons: 1) To quantify impacts relating to the importation of fill from off site; and 2) To quantify impacts to cultural resources on site due to cut.
- 6) **Noise** – In order to comply with Noise Element requirements and CEQA thresholds, the project requires attenuation of at least 5 dB for the outdoor use area on the five residential units fronting Halcyon Road. The original project involved building these units below street grade, resulting in a 6 foot retaining wall, which would result in sufficient noise attenuation. The new proposal involves building these units roughly at grade or above grade. As such, the attenuating retaining wall has been eliminated from the proposal. The project would need to include another mechanism for attenuating 5 dB of noise.
- 7) **Grading Plans** – The grading plans do not appear to be consistent with the cross-sections provided. One such example is that the cross-sections show an 6-8 foot retaining wall along the southerly property line, while the grading plans instead show transitional grading extending into the adjacent agricultural parcel. Please note that the Agricultural Commissioner's Office will not be supportive of having transitional grading occur on the agricultural parcel.
- 8) **Southerly Setback** – A southerly property line setback of roughly 6.5 feet is proposed. The use of large trees for screening is proposed in this setback area in order to address visibility of the large storage buildings. We are particularly concerned that due to the small setback and the placement of structural impediments (mini-storage building and 8-10 foot retaining wall) that vegetation growth may be affected. A setback of at least 10 feet would be more appropriate to ensure that there is sufficient room for screening vegetation.

PRIMARY REVISIONS

The following revisions need to be made in advance of the environmental document being completed:

1. **Remove Condominium Concept for Storage Units** – The project will need to abandon the storage condominium concept in favor of rental units. Please revise the tract map / condominium plan accordingly. At your option, you may wish to separate the mini-storage use from the residential condominium by proposing a new parcel (non-airspace).

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Condominium Plan / Tract Map

2. **Provide Details on Retaining Walls**
 - a. Retaining walls need to be clearly shown on the grading plans.
 - b. The location of the retaining walls and spot elevations (both top-of-wall and bottom-of-wall) need to be provided. The spot elevations need to be provided at 25-foot intervals. The maximum height of each retaining wall also needs to be clearly denoted.
 - c. If retaining walls are required to accommodate road improvements per County A-3b standards (with detached sidewalk) and in compliance with ADA requirements, this would also need to be shown.
 - d. Retaining walls over 4 feet in height need to be minimized, particularly where these walls are visible.
 - e. Retaining walls exceeding 6 feet in height are not appropriate. These would need to be split into multiple walls set back a reasonable distance from one another. One example of an unacceptably high retaining wall would be the wall shown on the grading plans along the northerly property line, adjacent to the mobile home parks, which appears to have a height of 8 feet in some areas.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Grading Plans, Cross Sections

3. **Provide Details on Building Height** – Provide the average natural grade benchmark elevation and roof peak elevation for each structure to ensure that they do not exceed the maximum height requirements. It appears that the southerly mini-storage building is larger than 35 feet above average natural grade, and would need to be reduced in height.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Architectural Elevations, Cross Sections

4. **Increase the Southerly Setback** – The southerly property line setback needs to be increased to at least 10 feet to allow sufficient area for vegetative screening.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Site Plan, Grading Plans, Architectural Elevations, Cross Sections

5. **Swap the Storage Buildings** – The two storage buildings need to be “swapped” so that the northerly building becomes two stories (35 feet above pad elevation) and the southerly building becomes one story (25 feet above pad elevation). These buildings both still need to be no taller than 35 feet above average natural grade. Use of decorative features (i.e. false windows/doors, change in colors, change in materials, etc.) needs to be maintained on the southerly elevation of the southerly mini-storage

structure. This would still provide the same effect of blocking particulate matter and pesticides while offering additional benefits: 1) reduces visual impacts; 2) brings structures into compliance with maximum height requirements; and 3) reduces structural area.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Site Plan, Grading Plans, Architectural Elevations, Cross Sections

6. **Reduce Total Structural Area** – Total structural area needs to be reduced by approximately 4,064 square feet to total no more than 35,336 square feet. Please note that the residential garages are not included in this calculation, but upper floors are. Please provide the structural area for all buildings and sum them to demonstrate that this requirement is being met.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Site Plan, Grading Plans, Floor Plans, Architectural Elevations, Condominium Plan / Tract Map, Cross Sections

7. **Address Noise Attenuation** – Revise the plans and provide details on how you propose to address noise attenuation. Attenuation of 5 dB needs to be provided for the outdoor activity area on residential units 1 through 5. Please note that the use of a large visible wall along the Halcyon Road frontage would not be supported, as it would be inconsistent with ordinance requirements for fencing height and would create additional visual impacts.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Depends on what changes are proposed.

8. **Ensure Consistency Between Cross Sections, Architectural Elevations, and Grading Plans** – Revise cross-sections, architectural elevations, and grading plans as needed to ensure that they are consistent with one another. One example is the retaining wall shown on the grading plans between the mini-storage office and the parking lot, which is not reflected in the elevations.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Grading Plans, Cross Sections, Architectural Elevations

9. **Provide Estimated Earthwork Quantities** – Provide estimated cut, fill, import, export, and site disturbance quantities. Additionally specify how much cut will be occurring at a depth of more than 16 inches. Cut below 16 inches needs to be minimized to avoid impacts to cultural resources.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Grading Plans. Alternatively, earthwork quantities can be provided on a separate document.

10. **Include Grading Necessary for Road Improvements on the Grading Plans** – Public Works will be requiring improvements to the A-3b (II) standard to Halcyon Road, including a detached sidewalk, but excluding a parking lane. Additionally a center turn lane is required. The grading plans need to reflect these improvement requirements. In particular we need to see how the on-site grading scheme will interface with improvements in the right-of-way, and if this will be accomplished through transitional grading or if retaining walls will be necessary. Cross-Sections would also need to be expanded to show the relation of the site to Halcyon Road.

REQUIRES REVISIONS TO: Grading Plans, Cross Sections.

SUBMITTAL OF REVISIONS

- Provide a minimum of 7 full-size sets of all sheets requiring revision.
- Provide 2 sets reduced to 8.5" x 11" and 2 sets reduced to 11" x 17" status.
- Provide digital copies by email or on CD.

All submittals need to be received in the Permit Center by 4:30PM on Thursday, September 25, 2008 to ensure that staff is able to adequately meet all statutory timeframes.

If any of the above items are not sufficiently addressed, one of two things will happen:

- If the re-design is crucial to the project, we may need to request a continuance in order for that issue to be appropriately addressed; and/or
- If the re-design can possibly be conditioned, we will need to add it as a condition of approval

We have found in the past that major problems can arise later in the process if we condition a project for re-design without having plans that demonstrate that the re-design can work. For example, if we conditioned that the residences fronting Halcyon Road be lowered six feet in order to comply with Noise Element requirements and it later comes out during the grading permit process that doing so would impact cultural resources beyond what we analyzed, the project would need to go back to public hearing on a reconsideration. This adds significant costs and process time onto a project. As such, **we strongly urge that all revisions identified above be made up-front, at this time.**

If you have any questions about the process for the revised project, please contact me at (805) 781-5136 or by email (mconger@co.slo.ca.us).

Sincerely,



Michael T. Conger
Current Planning Division

c: Supervisor K. H. "Katcho" Achadjian, District 4, Board of Supervisors
Vicki Janssen, Legislative Aide, District 4, Board of Supervisors
Kami Griffin, Assistant Director, Department of Planning and Building
Warren Hoag, Division Manager, Current Planning, Department of Planning and Building
Coker Ellsworth [By Email: cokerellsworth@att.net]